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Come Home and Pick Some Flowers

Everything just stopped. I forgot where I was and my mind just went blank. I knew my lip had started to tremble and I couldn’t breathe.

“What?” I asked in complete disbelief. “Leaving?! How can you just-- what?” My brother looked at me with such a hurt expression on his face. He looked so sorry for me. I tried to look away because I couldn’t meet his eyes.

“Dottie, they said it’s only until the war ends, ok? You’ll be ok without me for a little while.” He cupped my face and gave me a sad smile.

“Promise?” I asked as I finally met his gaze.

“Dorothy, I won’t be gone forever. I didn’t even know they’d want me. This is all so new, but I have to go through with this. If they need me there’s nothing I can do. ”

“But... *I* need you,” I mumbled. He gave me a firm hug. I have no idea how long it lasted, but ever since he turned and walked out the door, I’ve been counting the hours.

It had been two years. Connie Francis sang ‘Where the Boys Are’ to me through the little red radio on the kitchen counter. I replayed the day that Christopher left in my head over and over again. Yet, I was numb to that type of hysterical emotion. I didn’t cry much anymore. Some days the pain of

missing him was so strong inside that I couldn’t help but break down. Most of the time though, I composed myself. I scooped the wet mush into Poppy’s food bowl, and the little grey terrier ran over. Each week, when I’d walk into his room, I still felt a rush of pain. I needed to make sure his room was kept clean and tidy, but stripping his bed was the hardest thing I’ll have to do. The house lacked clutter, but it lacked color, too. The walls were pale grey, and the floor was carpeted. It was just me and my dog here. My parents were killed in a car crash when Chris was 18 and I was 15. They said the driver was high on some sort of pill and lost control. Because he was ‘under the influence’ he got a smaller sentence than he would have otherwise. It was his fault, and just because he said sorry and offered to help Christopher and I if we needed, that won’t bring them back. No one will ever find me controlled by some awful drug, I thought. How could you live knowing you ended the lives of two wonderful people? I get too worked up when I think about my parents for too long, so I decided to take my dog Poppy onto the porch. I loved sitting there in that ancient wicker chair where I usually prefered to read some romance novel about pirates or cowboys. Every so often I’d look up at the McGregor’s old house which had been completely empty since they moved out. Nothing ever happened on that side of the street so it was easy to get lost in thought sitting out there. Everything was silent except for the soft breeze you can hear outside. This night I wasn’t up for watching the news, and I’d find more comfort in the Bible some days anyway. Before I turned out the lights, everything must be clean, so I scanned the house in the dim candlelight for anything out of place. Everything seemed alright, and at last, I was ready for a long sleep after a simple day.

I woke up, put on my green slippers, and walk into the bathroom just like every other day. I shuffled into the kitchen and started to prepare some food. All I had in the cupboard was some stale cereal and some oats. I decided to go with the oats, considering they’d probably be the most edible of

the two. I turned off the stove when I was done cooking, sat down, picked up my spoon, and felt the grey porridge stick to the insides of my mouth. I turned on the television to the news.

“It’s January 21st. President Nixon has officially entered his presidency! Last night we saw that he’s convinced that a direct win for the U.S. in Vietnam simply won’t happen. He said that Americans quote ‘cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another’.” I really had no idea what to expect from Nixon as our new president. I just hope he makes good decisions regarding our troops, I thought. I don’t know what I’d do if anything happened to Christopher. The only thing that seemed to change each day was the news I’d watch on the television. Poppy’s charcoal fur rubbed up against my toes. She always lay by my feet. It was simple, but still stimulating to learn about the world. Sometimes I zoned out and forgot to listen to what they were saying. This day was one of those times so I zoned back in and looked to the tv.

“Alright folks, that’s all we have for this morning. Tune into ABC News at 10pm for another report!” I turned it off and just sat there in the red velvet arm chair. I think it had only been a few minutes, but it could’ve been longer. All of a sudden, I heard a loud whirring sound, blaring over and over again. I brushed Poppy out of the way and hopped over to the great, glass window. Arms crossed and eyes squinting, I looked out and saw a tremendous white movers truck backing into the driveway of the house that was for sale across the street.

“I guess someone’s finally moving in,” I said to Poppy.

I stepped outside, the stone porch felt warm under my feet, and the winter sun felt nice on my head. Along with the mover, a girl with long black wavy hair jumped out of the passenger door of the truck. With her arms flailing in all different directions, she told the mover where to put which box in which place. She was definitely that type of girl who know’s exactly what, how, and when she wants something. For something so time consuming, she seemed to be having a great time giving orders. The

fringe on her suede jacket swayed from side to side with that soft breeze in the air. Her clothes were like the ones those hippie kids wear when they protest the war outside grocery stores. I noticed she was always looking upwards with a slight grin on her face. She looked around, it seemed like she was taking in her new neighborhood, her new life.

She finally got to my house, and at first her eyes just walked past me. She knew I was there. She turned back and saw my face, and she looked at the little curly terrier in my arms. That smile she had grew even wider and she waved. She cupped her hands over her mouth and shouted,

“Hey! I’m Angela!” Her smile was so contagious, and I couldn’t help but smile back. For the first time I felt genuinely happy, and I don’t quite know why.

The next morning I skipped the news. The action going on across the street was much more exciting than anything I could’ve found on television. Angela was doing all sorts of crazy stretches. She twisted her torso from side to side, and then she touched her toes. A woman who sounded like she had a sore throat screeched the words ‘don’t you cry’ from the radio inside Angela’s house. Without a doubt the whole neighborhood could hear the abrasive guitar solo that seemed to go on for minutes. When Angela finally saw me looking, she sprung up from the grass and ran into her house to lower the music. I hugged my arms to my chest since I was only wearing my satin bathrobe my mother bought me long ago before she died. I was rather shy but I waved and smiled. I smoothed out the robe before she got to my side of the street, getting rid of any wrinkles.

“Hi there!” she said excitedly. “I saw you yesterday, but I don’t think we officially met. I’m Angela.” she smiled.

“Yes of course I remember,” I replied, a tad awkwardly. “I’m Dorothy but everyone calls me Dot.”

“Cool name. I like that, Dot.”

“How do you like the house?” I asked.

“Well they left it very clean! But it’s just a little, well, bland inside. I was thinking of going to the street fair tomorrow and getting some stuff to decorate. You want to help me?”

“Oh I don’t think I’d be very good with that kind of stuff,” I said sheepishly.

“Ok well... I’m about to go on a run. Do you want to come with me?” I haven’t gone on a run in I don’t know how long. I took walks with Poppy for exercise but that’s about it.

“Oh... I don’t know,” I mumbled. Still I felt a little self-conscious.

“Oh c’mon... I’ll make sure I don’t go too fast,” she said with a grin.

Next thing I knew we were three miles from home and sweat was dripping down my face, onto the track suit that Angela let me borrow.

“So...” I spluttered very out of breath. “Why did you move to Arlington?”

“Well, I’ve always thought New York seemed really cool and my band wanted to move out here. It’s a little easier to get inspired here with all the people, rather than in the tiny town where I used to live in Connecticut.” she replied.

“Wow, you’re in a band?” I asked.

“Yep, and I sing lead. We’re into psychedelic rock,” she answered as she wiped the sweat off her forehead.

“Oh, I must say I’m not so familiar with that type of music.” I’d normally only listen to a few stations on my radio, and the only records I have are ones that either my parents, when they were still alive, or Christopher bought before he went to Vietnam. Most of the music was fairly outdated.

“Really? Well did you hear what I was listening to when I was stretching?”

“That woman screaming? That’s the type of stuff you do?” I didn’t purposefully mean to sound snobby and I still hope she doesn’t think any less of me. Instead she laughed and said,

“Janis Joplin? If only we could be half as talented as she is. Maybe I just have to show you some more of her music before you make any judgements. In fact, my band and I are gonna hang out over at Steve’s place. He plays bass. I think you’d like all of them. You’d have a lot of fun with us. You want to come?” I thought about everything for a minute. It was about time for me to stop being afraid of trying new things. Talking with Angela just this once had made me feel happier than I had in a while already. I mean, what horrible harm could really come from it? Of course I’d have to leave Poppy alone for a while, and I’d miss the evening news. Still I replied,

“You know, I think that’d be really fun. I’d love to come.”

Angela told me to go over to her house at 6 o’clock and my watch read 5:50. Better to go early than late. My straight dirty blonde hair was shoulder length and combed behind my back neatly. I decided to go with a longer beige dress and some black heels I hadn’t worn in forever. I left Poppy at the door with those big sad eyes looking up at me. After I walk across the street, Angela opened her door with a kind expression on her face. She looked me up and down but she didn’t say anything about the clothes I was wearing.

“Ok let’s go!” she says excitedly. We walked down to the bus stop and waited.

It had been half an hour of bus riding and we eventually got to Steve’s house. I was feeling quite nervous. I’d never met these people and I didn’t know what they’d think of me. Angela knocked, and a tall gangly man with greasy brown hair and stubble opened it.

“Hey friends!” he exclaimed. “You must be Dottie!” he said giving me a hug. I’d never had someone be so friendly without even knowing me too well. Walking in the house, I noticed dim lighting and a strange, sweet smell. There were posters all over with people I assumed to be musicians.

The walls were bright orange and prayer flags lined the ceiling. I’d never been in such a vibrant and strange house. We eventually found the basement, and when we opened the door, the faint music I heard going down the stairs became incredibly loud, and that sweet smell presented itself as a blanket of smoke. I coughed, but as the smoke cleared I was able to make out three other people sitting in a circle. A red-headed girl who looked to be in her early twenties, about the same age as I was, wearing a wide-brimmed brown hat had a guitar in her hands. She was trying to play along with the music which she told me was Jimi Hendrix. A man shorter than Steve slouched in a large armchair. He had long stringy blond hair and a scruffy beard. He had a joint in between his fingers, which I assumed contained marijuana, and he let out a puff of smoke in the shape of a ring, his face in a state of pure bliss. The third person was a very short brunette with freckles. She reminded me of a chipmunk, with her chubby cheeks and almond eyes. She laughed hysterically, halfway on the couch and halfway on the floor.

“Guys,” Steve said. “This is Dot. Can I call you that, Dot?”

“Sure I guess,” I said apprehensively. Christopher was the only one who called me Dot. Still, I thought it was really nice how Steve was trying to be friendly.

“Hey Dottie!” the redhead said with a raspy voice. I’m Joan, I play guitar, as you can see,” she chuckles.

“Larry, and I play the drums!” the blond guy shouted.

“And I’m Alison.” The chipmunk girl was still laughing. “I sing too,” she said. We walked in and sat on the couch.

“You want some?” Larry asked hazily as he picked up his joint.

“Oh no, I’m fine,” I tried to say politely.

“You know what I think...” Joan said sneakily. “I bet you all she’s never smoked before.” I immediately felt anxious. I didn’t want them to know I was such a baby and that I, under other circumstances, would be so quick to disapprove. I started to fidget with my hands.

“Ever?! In her whole life? No, c’mon..” Steve said. Everyone looked at me.

“Well...” I muttered nervously.

“Oh my gosh Dot!” Allison exclaimed. “Really?”

“Well that doesn’t surprise me” Angela said. “This one’s pure,” she smiled.

“Well you gotta try it!” Larry retorted.

“Oh I don’t know,” I said. I know how nervous I must have sounded. Maybe I should just take a drag, I thought. Just a small one. I think that’d be ok if we just stay inside and don’t go anywhere right? If it’s just me and I don’t accidentally hurt someone or anything I don’t see too much harm. It wasn’t the same as pills, so in my mind, I gave myself the ok. Out of nowhere I decided to take the joint from Larry. I inhaled and started to sputter and cough everywhere. The band laughed and I already felt a little embarrassed. I tried again, and this time it was different. My head felt massive, yet at the same time I felt a weight lift of my shoulders. The guitar in the background became distorted and my breathing got heavy. I didn’t feel bad. The sensation was actually enjoyable and I felt more relaxed than I usually did. My friends laughed a little but then we get to talking.

“You guys...” Steve said. “I bet you Hendrix sounds better live than down here in this hole.” Everybody chimed in with ‘yeahs’. “Anyone heard about Woodstock?” he asked.

“Yeah I guess it’s supposed to be bitchin!” Joan said. “Like it’s apparently now gonna be in Bethel which isn’t too far away. The whole festival is supposed to be only three days, but has some of my favorite bands coming. The poster I saw at the market said ‘3 days of peace and music’.” I hadn’t heard anything about this festival.

“You know,” Alison started. “It’s in a few months. They let you buy tickets at the gate. Supposed to be a big crowd so a lot of fun.”

“Well we *have* to go!” Steve exclaimed. “I mean Larry has the van, right Larry?” Larry looked up, completely out of it and said,

“Huh? Oh yeah, yeah sure.”

“Well alright then!” Angela clapped her hands. “It’s settled. We’ll all go in August. I mean this is the type of stuff we came here to do, you guys. I think this will be great,” she says. The rest of the night we all laughed and laughed, even after we sobered up. Eventually, Larry and Allison crashed, and Angela and I took the bus home. I got home, and waved to Angela from across the street. I can’t say I’ve ever been around so many hippies. If I had known about the type of people I just spent my evening with, I’m not sure how I would have felt about it. The funky clothes, the loud music, and the marijuana were all things I didn’t relate to. Surprisingly, I loved all that loud music, the things we talked about, and I’m a little embarrassed to say, but I enjoyed the marijuana. I actually had more fun than I had in a really long time. It’s the most fun I had since Christopher left.

Seven months ago, Angela and I had only just begun the runs we now took together every morning. I’d been hearing so much about her life, and she’d taken an interest in mine. We talked and talked about everything, from the latest hair trends to the crazy different types of music we both listened to. For a pair of incredibly different people, we always found something to talk about while having a great time. I had also become closer with the band. They were so welcoming to me, and I think back to seven months ago when I was that sheepish girl who couldn’t let her hair flow naturally, and always wore those prudish outfits. Whenever I was at home, I still loved listening to Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra, but artists like the Beatles, and the Grateful Dead appealed to me as well. I

was more excited each day, and my routine would change. I didn’t always just sit in that chair and watch the news all the time. We’d go out to eat, or order in and watch movies. We loved going to the park, too. There was a field with wild daisies growing in it, and I loved to make daisy chains and put them in Joan’s hair while she’d play her guitar. One day, I made a beautiful chain. It was Christopher’s birthday and I hadn’t heard from him since his last letter when he wrote me to let me know he was still alright. I had spent half an hour picking the perfect cream flowers; each dainty petal had to be intact. When I was done, I had gathered about 30, one for every month he’d been gone. The chain was too big to rest on any of our heads, so I just left it in the park. It was so beautiful in a sad kind of way.

It was August 15th, the first day of the festival, and I was getting ready to meet the van outside. I put on the new tie dye shirt the Allison and I made together. The practical blue jeans I bought last year were now cropped with holes in them, and the new suede boots I bought were very comfortable. I kept one of the daisy chains I made at the park and put it on top of my head. I also found some round sunglasses that were tinted red in my drawer that Larry had bought for me. He said it made acid trips appear even crazier when I looked around. I heard that obnoxious horn from the street and Allison giggled.

“C’mon Babe!” she called cheerfully. “Don’t wanna be late! Supposed to be a lot of traffic.” I rushed out from my bedroom, now adorned with posters of Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd. Poppy stayed with some other neighbors since we were going to be gone for three days. When I got outside, the laughing and horseplay of my friends stopped. They looked at me, surprised by what they saw. They had all been there to see me change as I became more free. They’d seen me at the happiest moments in my life, but they’d never seen me entirely put together like this. Sure, a lot of it was what I looked like on the outside, but I think they could tell more how transformed I was on the inside.

“Woah...” Joan said slowly.

“I don’t know what it is,” Steve said looking perplexed. “You just seem really...”

“Happy,” Larry answered. I smiled because they were right. I’d never felt so free to just alive, so free to make mistakes, and so free to have a good time. I hopped in the trunk of the van, and we were off.

Angela calculated that it’d take us around an hour and a half to get from her house in Arlington to Bethel. It had been almost an hour, and we drove past a lane that appeared to be backed up twenty miles long. Good thing we aren’t them, I thought.

Larry parked, and one by one we stepped out of the van. I couldn’t quite see all the people until I stepped outside the car. I could see thousands of heads in a sea of people. Suddenly I was overwhelmed with a rush of smells. Weed smoke, the stench of sweaty Birkenstocks, and rain filled my nostrils. Canvas tents were set up and vans were parked everywhere. I began to wander around before we found a patch of grass to settle down on. I turned to my left and saw a group of girls passing around a bottle of pills to one another, while braiding wildflowers into each other’s frizzy hair. To my right I noticed vibrant tapestries hanging over poles with cheap-looking fold up tables in front of them. Glass beads of fluorescent orange and green lined the tables along with hand-made hemp bracelets and knit shawls. Women held up the accessories in hopes that possible customers would walk by. Only day one and I had a feeling there was so much more great to come. Two more days to go, and from what I could see, the amount of people there was in the thousands. My math is poor, but I could tell we sat on a plot that was hundreds of acres long. My senses were going nuts. I didn’t even know what to make of everything. There was that tent not too far ahead of us that was moving from side to side, and every now and then strange noises came out of it. A sign was posted on it that read ‘Freak Out Tent’ in trippy letters, which I assumed was for those unable to handle the power of some drugs. I’d say most, if not everyone was smoking there. People carried steaming paper plates of corn and burgers back to their

spots on the grass. There was a banner above the kitchen area that made note that the Hog Farm commune was providing food and refreshments for everyone. Before I could think about anything else, an epic guitar chord filled the grassy area and a man who Allison told me was Richie Havens sauntered out onto the stage, long orange shirt, acoustic guitar and all. He started with ‘From the Prison’, and after three hours of hearing him sing, I was completely mesmerized by his liberating words and passionate voice. This one performance had me so excited to sit through hours and hours more. Melanie Safka looked so beautiful when she performed ‘Beautiful People’ and Tim Hardin was so dreamy when he sang ‘Susan’. By the time Joan Baez came on I was already drifting to sleep. Larry was dropping acid and laughing like crazy. Angela was humming along to ‘Swing Low Sweet Chariot’. Max Yasgur was going to have a hard time getting all these flower children to leave his dairy farm. I was in pure bliss and I just lay there on our picnic blanket and listened. I listened to the music, and I listened to the peace. The only screams and yelling were from some girl on a wild trip, or the cheering approval of the crowd for Ravi Shankar. I closed my eyes, and my brain was lifted. It wasn’t weighed with any concern or regret or worry. “Swing low sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home”.

“Flowers growing all around me…” I awoke to hear Quill blasting from the stage. Woah.. how could I have slept past noon? My bed head and sagging eyes awoke to greet the ‘morning’. I guess it was some funky drink I got last night from this guy who said his name was Wavy Gravy that was making me so tired. Seemed like a strange name, maybe my mind was playing tricks on me. I asked Joan about it and she said I was right. Apparently he led the Hog Farm Commune. I had really made an effort to avoid strange foods or just ‘say no’ to any funny looking brownies kids would offer me. Tickets were only 6 dollars each day, so the band and I were totally fine with sticking around. There was so much more great music to come, and I wasn’t going anywhere. About an hour later, this guy

with wildly curly hair and a big furry mustache came out and started his set. It was something I’d never heard before. It was this funky hybrid of latin and rock.

“Isn’t Santana wild?” Angela exclaimed excitedly. All of a sudden, I had this urge to move. I grabbed Allison’s fat, stubby arms, and pulled her up off the grass.

“Woah…!” She started to giggle. I swung her around and around to the jam called ‘Jingo’ until we both fell on the ground, our bellies hurt from laughter.

Dinner was kinda weird. To be honest, I didn’t really know what it was. Even though Hog Farm was in charge of preparing everything, I heard that the government was providing a lot of the food for us. Isn’t that ironic?

I wandered around a little past the kitchen, and a group of young wide-eyed hippies motioned me over. We ended up talking for the whole time The Grateful Dead performed.

“Yeah isn’t this crazy?!” a red-headed boy who looked to be in his late teens exclaimed.

“It was like… supposed to be called just ‘A Weekend in the Country’. Haha yeah right! I tried to count all the people here and then I just lost track!” He fell over onto the lap of this blond girl in a drunken haze. He started to snore. Everyone had smiles as great as a moon and were nothing but cheerful.

All of a sudden, I felt a wet drop run down my forehead. ‘I Put a Spell on You’ was still ringing in my ears when suddenly, an intense rainfall started to pour down on everyone’s heads. I heard groans and screams from all over. Mud started to get everywhere as people moved around. I felt the slime and grime start to soak up my socks. Creedence didn’t stop singing. As we all waddled around and tried to stay dry, Joan said,

“You know, this isn’t so bad. I mean, we’re all here together.” She grabbed my hand and intertwined her fingers with mine. It reminded me of when Christopher grabbed my hands, looked me in the eyes, and said goodbye for the last time. Except this was different. I didn’t feel anxious or like if

I let go I’d never get to feel her hand again. I felt at peace, standing here, each droplet of water sliding down the back of my neck. It felt as though I didn’t have any responsibilities or things I had to worry about. We were all just here, in this moment, without the sound of gunshots or a lonely silence.

The sloshy mixture that was once crushed dirt and water was turned into a thick muddy mess. It was everywhere but that didn’t stop the bands from getting on stage and playing their hearts out. By now all the genres I’d heard perform were all over the place. It was crazy to see so many different styles all in one place, all taking their turn to perform on one stage. We were all still sitting near our tent waiting for the next band. I noticed that behind me a couple was standing, wrapped in a pink and cream paisley quilt, just holding each other in the cold. My ears perked up to the sound of this loud raspy voice that yelled from the stage.

“How we doing today my friends?!” I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. Angela’s face lit up and Joan and Allison started to giggle and jump up and down. Steve shouted,

“Yeah! It’s Joplin!” The woman I had been listening to for months was only a matter of feet away from me. She was wearing this sort of galaxy tie-dye print dress with winged sleeves. She had big chunky beads of all different colors wrapped around her neck. Her round sunglasses were huge and tinted orange. She had her whole band with her and they started to play.

After a set that almost seemed endless, Janis Joplin and her band left the stage. Throughout the rest of the day about five other act performed. ‘Blackbird’ by Crosby, Stills and Nash was really catchy, and I also really liked that song ‘Blue Moon’ by some band I forgot the name of. It was early, but I was feeling so exhausted from so much music. Randomly, this man in a bear costume jumped out at this group of kids who were yelling just a little too loud.

“Scream any louder and I’ll be sure to find some nice custard pies to throw in your faces!” he screeched. He started to laugh at the dumbfounded looks on their faces and then he hopped away. We all looked at each other confused, and then started laughing. Maybe that was a part of the “disciplinary”

system we had here. I knew there was something called the “Please Force”, but I was not sure how much “behavioral enforcement” they had to offer. At this point, the number of people still on the lawn was growing smaller and smaller. Most had left. Things to do, people to see, but the six of us weren’t in any hurry. This was my life. The grass under my legs was all dried up and scratchy, but my head was comfortable on Larry’s belly. There wasn’t much of a strong weed scent anymore, and all that remained aside from some people was some trash and deserted forts. Allison tapped my shoulder to get my attention.

“Look guys!” she exclaimed. Jimi Hendrix, electric guitar and all walked out onto the stage. Him coming out at the very end surprised us all because no one thought he’d come, considering this was the last performance at the end of the last day. He had on this white and blue suede fringe jacket that was just out of this world. Only he could pull that off. He had a scarlet bandana wrapped around his forehead, causing his afro to stick up.

“Man, you see his guitar?” a tall guy with bushy eyebrows said to his friend who was standing next to me. His friend didn’t seem to pay much attention but he continued.

“I heard that Gibson made it just for him. Just for this!” He seemed so excited about this, and I must admit, it was pretty cool looking. It had this gleamy texture, and as he strummed it for the first time, everyone was mesmerized.

It seemed like he was playing forever, and almost twenty songs later, the crowd size diminished even further. I had no conception of time, except I knew it was sometime fairly early in the morning. The six of us moved up closer to the stage and stood and waited. He played more and everyone

whistled and clapped.. His interpretation was so unorthodox and in the middle of it I actually forgot what song he was playing. Yes, because it was almost unrecognizable, but also because I was so transfixed on his hands. The way he moved all over the place with his fingers, and how every strum sounded different from the next. Not too long ago I may have found this music to be nothing but the kind of noise that gives me headaches. Here I felt a sort of peace. I looked over and I saw Angela tearing up. Joan’s arms rested on Steve and Allison’s shoulders and she had a sentimental look in her eyes. Larry’s mouth was slightly ajar and his eyelids were drooping. I’m not sure if his expression was the result of an emotional connection to the music, or simply the result of too many joints. Maybe it was both. I, on the other hand, was just taking everything in. In this moment, I didn’t care about anything. I’d heard version after version of our National Anthem and I’d never come across anything like this. Whenever I heard some political figure or famous person sing this, they always pretended like everything was ok. Like our sons, our husbands, our brothers weren’t being killed on foreign soil. Like they weren’t so far away from us, and like we didn’t stay up late every night not knowing if they would ever come home. I think everyone there, high on acid or not, appreciated the honesty. Hendrix showed everyone what so many of us were afraid to say out loud. To even think in our heads. Our nation was so messed up. As a whole, we weren’t clean, quiet, peaceful or always beautiful. Why was there so much fighting? Why did it seem like peace and forgiveness were never an option?

Christopher, along with 1.4 million men were drafted by last half of the 1960s. Now, the president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has died. It’d been almost a month since Woodstock and I finally received the message I was dreading. September 30th. I open the letter telling me that Christopher had been killed on the 12th in Northern Vietnam after President Nixon decided to resume the bombing. My heart stopped, yet I didn’t experience that feeling of shock. Still, I didn’t leave the

house for weeks. I refused to believe that my sweet brother, the person who took care of me in my youth, my best friend, was never to be seen by me again. Eventually, I let Angela and the band come in and comfort me and bring me food. They always listened whenever I’d talk about Christopher and they knew how important he was to me. They let me grieve, but they didn’t let me grieve alone.

Later I decided to move in with Angela. The old house didn’t take care of me too well and I couldn’t really take care of it all by myself. Too many memories consumed me when I’d walk in certain places in the house. Still, I didn’t want to leave it behind completely. I guess living right across the street was a good way to still keep it in my mind.

I found out later that a one whole million people had to turn back from Woodstock because there wasn’t enough room for them. I still can’t believe I was so lucky to have been a part of the whole thing. To be immersed in nothing but peace was incredible.

The war officially ended in 1973. I used to be so bitter about the war, how they just took my brother away. I still think he should be here, but since he isn’t I’m enjoying the life that *I* get to live. Chris didn’t get that. *I* get to stay here, and because of that, I will make the most of my time left. I’ll spend time with my friends, listen to music, and I’ll walk Poppy. I let my hair go curly, and I won’t be afraid to jump on my bed and jam to The Stones. I will always keep picking flowers.

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Attribution of Research

1. MailOnline, Spencer Bright for. "Forty Far-out Facts You Never Knew About

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* One million people had to turn back because of congested traffic
* Tickets were sold for six dollars per person each day
* Initially advertised as ‘A Weekend in the Country’
* In the end 500,000 people attended the festival
* They hired a New Mexico commune called 'The Hog Farm' who provided their security called “Please Force” along with other services
* Hog Farm commune was in charge of food, utensils and catering
* Hog Farm commune was led by Wavy Gravy
* Wavy Gravy and the commune provided security and discipline by wearing a Smokey Bear costume and warned people by saying they'd be doused in fizzy water or hit with custard pies
* The weather wasn't considered nice because rain poured creating mud, so the whole festival and people were very messy
* Most people at Woodstock smoked marijuana, 9 out of 10 specifically
* The U.S. Army airlifted/transported food to the concert goers who would have starved without it
* Hendrix had 19 songs in his set list
* Jimi Hendrix closed Woodstock with his version of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Most people had left by the time he went on stage
* Jimi Hendrix wore a white suede fringe jacket, a red bandana around his head, and bell bottoms
* Jimi Hendrix had a white Gibson guitar custom made for him for the event
* An iconic photo depicts a young couple at Woodstock embracing under a cream and pink quilt

2. Smitha, Frank E. "The Year 1969 From The People History." *What Happened in 1969*

*Inc. Pop Culture, Prices and Events*. N.p., 2007. Web. 12 Feb. 2015.

* President Nixon came into office on January 20th, 1969 with the quote that Americans "cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another," as said in his inaugural address
* On September 11th, President Nixon resumed bombing in Northern Vietnam
* On September 2, president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, died

3. The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Woodstock." *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

N.p.: Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d. N. pag. Print.

* Held for three days in August 1969
* The first day was the 15th
* Initially it was supposed to be held in Woodstock but was then moved to Bethel, New York
* The official Woodstock poster advertised the slogan “3 Days of Peace and Music”

4. "The Woodstock '69 Lineup." Woodstock. N.p., 2015. Web. 07 Feb. 2015.

* Joan Baez was the last performer on the second day. She sang the song “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” as one of her last songs
* Quill performed as the first band on the second day, a little after noon. They played four songs, one of which was “Driftin”
* Crosby, Stills and Nash performed on the third day, one of their songs being “Blackbird”
* Santana performed on day two bringing a fusion of latin music and rock. One of the songs he performed was called “Jingo”
* Richie Havens was the first performer on day one opening with “From the Prison”
* Havens was dressed in a long orange shirt with an acoustic guitar
* Melanie Safka performed “Beautiful People” on day one
* Janis Joplin wore a galaxy tie-dye print dress with winged sleeves, beaded necklaces, and tinted orange sunglasses when she performed.
* Jimi Hendrix performed at 9 in the morning on August 18th

5. "Top 100 Songs of 1961 - Billboard Year End Charts." *Bob Borst's Home of Pop*

*Culture*. N.p., 2001. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

* “Where the Boys Are” was a popular song in the early 60s by Connie Francis

6. "WAR & PEACE: Two Nations Divided." *PBS*. PBS, 2005. Web. 07 Feb. 2015.

* The war officially ended in 1973
* 1.4 million men were drafted by the last half of the 60s

7. "Woodstock." *American History*. ABC-CLIO, 2015. Web. 5 Feb. 2015.

* Festival on a 600 acre plot of land
* There was a 20 mile long traffic jam to Woodstock

8. "Woodstock." International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. 2008.

*Encyclopedia.com.* 3 Feb. 2015<http://www.encyclopedia.com>.

* Land Woodstock was held on was a dairy farm in Bethel, NY owned by Max Yasgur
* Those overindulged by drugs could enter a “freak-out” tent to go and calm down
* At Woodstock hippies sold merchandise like clothing, artwork and jewelry to each other